

## Message Text

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22-11

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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R 210925Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8837

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 5769

EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-3

STAGS: SREF, PINT, PINS, BG, US, LY

SUBJ: BANGLADESH OFFICERS GOING TO LIBYA

REF: BANGKOK 24536

1. WE SHARE VIEW OF EMBASSY BANGKOK THAT EMBASSY TRIPOLI SHOULD BE FORWARDED ABOUT THE KEY FIGURES AMONG THE BANGLADESH OFFICERS ABOUT TO DESCEND ON LIBYA. THEY ENTERTAIN IDEA THAT AMERICAN INTEREST IN BANGLADESH IS (OR, AT LEAST, SHOULD BE) GREATER THAN IT IS, AND THUS MAY WELL ARRIVE ON EMBASSY'S DOORSTEP WITH IDEAS AND PROPOSALS FOR WAYS TO SAVE SOUTH ASIA FROM COMMUNIST TYRANNY. THE COURSE OF ACTION WHICH THEY WILL POSIT WILL DOUBTLESS INCLUDE SIGNIFICANT ROLES FOR THEMSELVES.

2. WITHIN THE PARTY NOW IN BANGKOK, FAROOK RAHMAN AND ABDUR RASHID OVERSHADOW THE OTHERS. WHETHER THEY ARE NOW LIEUTENANT COLONELS OR STILL MAJORS IS MATTER OF DEBATE BUT WE HAVE HEARD OF A PROMOTION LIST WHICH WAS APPROVED JUST BEFORE NOVEMBER 3 AND THEY COULD WELL HAVE BEEN INCLUDED ON THAT LIST. WHATEVER THEIR RANK MAY BE, THEY ARE STILL KNOWN AS QUOTE THE MAJORS END QUOTE FOR THE  
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RANKS THEY HELD WHEN THEY ORGANIZED AND BROUGHT OFF THE

COUP WHICH OVERTHREW SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN -- AND LED TO THE ERADICATION OF VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE FAMILY OF THE LATE PRESIDENT. THIS COUP WAS CONDUCTED WITH CONSIDERABLE ECLAT, BUT ITS VERY LIMITED OBJECTIVES AND CONSIDERABLE GOOD LUCK CONTRIBUTED MATERIALLY TO ITS SUCCESS.

3. IN POST-COUP SETTING, FAROOK AND RASHID OCCUPIED POSITIONS CLOSE TO PRESIDENT MOSHTAQUE AHMED, WHO HAD COME TO POWER AS A RESULT OF THE COUP. (FYI: MOSHTAQUE IS RASHID'S UNCLE, AND FAROOK IS MARRIED TO RASHID'S SISTER.) DURING THAT 80 DAY PERIOD, THE MAJORS FORMED ONE OF THE ELEMENTS -- SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, THE CIVILIAN CABINET AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS WERE THE OTHERS -- WHO DIRECTED THE AFFAIRS OF BANGLADESH. FAROOK AND RASHID SAW THEMSELVES AS "TROUBLE-SHOOTERS" AND "EXPEDITERS" WHO COULD AID THE PRESIDENT BY INTERVENING TO FREE BUREAUCRATIC LOGJAMS. IN THE LATTER DAYS OF MOSHTAQUE'S PRESIDENCY, THEIR ATTENTION TURNED INCREASINGLY TO FEARS OF INDIA AND THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE BANGLADESH MILITARY. SHORTLY BEFORE THE FALL OF MOSHTAQUE AND THEIR OWN FLIGHT TO

BANGKOK, FAROOK AND RASHID APPROACHED THE EMBASSY TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM AMERICAN SOURCES.

4. OUR EXPERIENCE REVEALED FAROOK AND RASHID TO BE DEDICATED NATIONALISTS, CONCERNED THAT BANGLADESH WOULD BECOME NOTHING BUT A SATELLITE OF INDIA AND, BY REASON OF THIS, A PAWN TO SOVIET INTENTIONS. RASHID SEEMED THE MORE MODEST BUT MORE THOUGHTFUL OF THE PAIR, WHILE FAROOK WAS THE MORE ASSERTIVE AND DOMINATING OF THE TWO. WE THINK THAT BOTH ARE INTELLIGENT, BUT THEIR THINKING -- PARTICULARLY THAT OF FAROOK -- IS NARROW AND THEIR VIEW OF THE WORLD NAIVE. HAVING RUN A SUCCESSFUL COUP

AND OCCUPIED POSITIONS OF PROXIMITY TO POWER (OR SUCH POWER AS MOSHTAQUE HELD), THEIR OWN APPRECIATION OF THEIR IMPORTANCE AND ROLE MAY HAVE BECOME UNWARRANTEDLY MAGNIFIED; FAROOK'S STATEMENTS IN BANGKOK CERTAINLY ADD SUBSTANCE TO THIS VIEW. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT THE NARROW-CONFIDENTIAL

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NESS OF VIEW, NAIVETE OF THOUGHT AND SENSE OF THEIR OWN IMPORTANCE -- PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF FAROOK -- WHICH MARK THE TWO COULD MAKE DEALING WITH THEM OCCASIONALLY HEAVY WORK. AND SINCE THEY HAVE SAID IN THEIR APPROACHES TO THE EMBASSY HERE THAT THEY WOULD EXPECT THE UNITED STATES TO BE RESPONSIVE TO BANGLADESH'S SECURITY NEEDS, THEY MAY MENTION SOME OF THE SAME THOUGHTS IN TRIPOLI.

5. THE FIGURE OF THE MAJORS IS A MATTER OF CONSTANT SPECULATION. ONE OF THE DEMANDS MADE BY THE SOLDIERS WHO MUTINIED ON NOVEMBER 7 CALLED FOR THE RETURN OF THE MAJORS TO BANGLADESH. FAROOK AND RASHID ARE FIGURES OF SOME CONTROVERSY IN DACCA: SOME HATE THEM BECAUSE OF THEIR ROLE IN THE OVERTHROW OF MUJIB AND THE SLAYING WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE COUP; SOME ENVY THEM BECAUSE OF THEIR INTIMATE ROLE IN RULING BANGLADESH BETWEEN AUGUST 15 AND NOVEMBER 3; SOME FEAR THEM BECAUSE OF SUSPICIONS THAT THEY MAY BE SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN THE NOVEMBER 3 SLAYINGS OF FOUR OF MUJIB'S CLOSEST ASSOCIATES. AND, OF COURSE, THEY HAVE THEIR SUPPORTERS WHO LAUD WHAT IS SEEN AS THEIR EFFORTS TO END CORRUPTION, TO BLUNT THE SPREAD OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE AND TO HALT INDIAN EFFORTS TO TRANSFORM BANGLADESH INTO A SATELLITE. WITH BANGLADESH DEEPLY DIVIDEN, THE RETURN OF THE MAJORS TO BANGLADESH NOW OR IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE WOULD FURTHER DESTABILIZE A VERY FRAGILE SITUATION.

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